



Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> February 2024

FAO the Members of the Scrutiny Committee,

We at Shrewsbury Business Improvement District (BID), representing over 750 businesses in Shrewsbury town centre, write to present our comprehensive economic impact report relating to Shropshire Council's planned parking charge increases in Shrewsbury (attached).

In January, the Council announced plans to significantly increase parking charges across Shrewsbury from April 1, with hikes between 29-67% in all but one council-owned car parks. This, coupled with the removal of parking charge caps, extension of charging hours and elimination of free Sunday parking, presents a significant challenge to the sustainability of our town centre's economic success.

The attached document evaluates the parking charge increases planned by Shropshire Council and their potential repercussions on our town centre's economy. Among our key estimates are:

- An annual decrease in town centre footfall of approximately 250,000
- A reduction in annual town centre spending of around £7 million
- An increase in parking overflow to residential areas, with an additional 81,000 making use of free street parking, affecting residents and increasing congestion in residential areas

The enclosed report expands on these points.

This is especially significant given today (February 15)'s news that the UK has entered a recession, and the council's announcement regarding its budget and necessary cuts to public services. In light of these developments, we feel it is even more important for the Council to back a thriving private economy.

We have been disappointed by the lack of consultation on such a significant change to town centre access. I refer you to our open letter to the Council (attached), in which we expressed our concerns regarding the impact of the changes and the lack of consultation and engagement with the business community.

In recent years, Shrewsbury has bucked national trends as a thriving town centre known for its vibrant independent business scene, despite several issues threatening the UK economy. To ensure the town can continue to thrive, it is our belief that the Council should be invested in removing barriers to success for businesses, rather than putting new barriers in place.

Considering our findings and feedback from more than 800 local businesses and town centre workers ([see all survey responses here](#)), we are urging the Council to:

1. Immediately halt plans for the proposed increases
2. Limit future increases to align with inflation rates
3. Engage in meaningful consultation with the business community on any future changes affecting town centre access
4. Develop comprehensive strategies that foster economic growth and improve access to the town centre

We are committed to ensuring Shrewsbury's ongoing prosperity as the county town and a major economic centre for all of Shropshire. We believe that through constructive dialogue and collaborative planning, we can ensure the town remains a thriving hub for all who live, work, and visit here.

Thank you for considering this crucial matter.

Sincerely,

Seb Slater  
*Executive Director*  
*Shrewsbury BID*